

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 28, 1891.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. CAMERON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 4184.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 4184) to amend the military record of William M. Porter, alias William S. Mackay, having had the same under consideration, beg leave to submit the following report:

The facts in this case are set forth in the following report of the House committee on this subject, which the committee adopt and recommend the passage of the bill:

The facts in this case are fully embraced in the report of the Adjutant-General submitted herewith, and from which it appears, to the satisfaction of your committee, that the records of the War Department should be so amended as to show that said William S. Mackay, alias William M. Porter, now deceased, was unavoidably absent from his command, which is the overt act for which his pay was suspended for a period of about eighteen months, it appearing to your committee beyond question that at the time he so absented himself he was laboring under mental derangement, and was therefore not responsible for his conduct.

We would therefore recommend that the bill do pass.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
*Washington, April 12, 1890.*

SIR: I have the honor to return herewith a communication from the chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representatives, inclosing and requesting information, suggestions, etc., concerning a bill (H. R. 4184) to amend the military record of William M. Porter, alias William S. Mackay, deceased, late first lieutenant, Third Infantry, so as to show that he was involuntarily and unavoidably absent from his command while a second lieutenant in the Twenty-ninth Infantry, from July 18, 1863, to December 21, 1869, instead of absent without leave, as now shown by the records.

William S. Mackay served as an enlisted man in the Third Massachusetts Cavalry from April 8, 1864, to September 28, 1865, and in the Eleventh United States Infantry from October 24, 1865, to September 11, 1866, when he accepted an appointment as second lieutenant, Eleventh Infantry. He was transferred to the Twenty-ninth Infantry September 21, 1866; became unassigned April 25, 1869; was assigned to the Third Infantry March 22, 1870; promoted first lieutenant November 1, 1872, and resigned February 15, 1873.

As a commissioned officer he served with his regiment in Virginia from September 11, 1866, to April 19, 1867; on registering duty at Marion, Va., to October 30, 1867; with his company at Lynchburg, Va., to December 23, 1867; as military commissioner at Hillsville, Va., to July 18, 1868, during which latter period he was also acting assistant adjutant-general subdistrict of Lynchburg, from May 30 to July 18, 1868; absent without leave to December 21, 1869; awaiting orders to March 22, 1870, when

assigned to Third Infantry, which he joined April 12, 1870; served with that regiment in the Indian Territory to some time in October, 1871; at Fort Lyon, Colorado (being also acting assistant quartermaster and acting commissary of subsistence) to January 1, 1873; and on leave of absence until date of resignation.

The records simply show that, as a matter of fact, Lieutenant Mackay was *technically* "absent without leave" from July 18, 1868, to December 21, 1869, nearly eighteen months, but the circumstances of his absence indicate very plainly that when he left his post, and for quite a long period afterwards, he was mentally irresponsible for his actions. It was understood he was never able to draw any pay for the period of his absence on account of said record of absence without leave.

Annexed hereto is a copy of the report of this office, dated October 27, 1882, on the application of Lieutenant Mackay (Wm. M. Porter) for a change in his record, with the action of the Secretary of War thereon, which report sets forth the action taken on former applications of the same character. His claim was again presented in October, 1889, accompanied by additional evidence of his mental incompetency and irresponsibility at the time of his unauthorized absence, as well as evidence showing that he was insane at times after leaving the military service, and that he became insane early in the summer of 1889, and while in that condition left the United States, became involved in trouble in Belfast, Ireland, and finally died in a hospital at that place. The Secretary of War decided, after considering this last application, that Congress is the only authority which can, under the facts set forth, properly provide for an amendment of the record or an allowance of the pay to which he would have been entitled in case the record of absence without leave had not been made.

Had Lieutenant Mackay been apprehended in 1868, before leaving the country, and been found to be insane, he would doubtless have been placed in a hospital or asylum and allowed pay the same as if on duty.

Copies of all the papers which appear to be necessary to a full understanding of the case in its present status are transmitted herewith.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CHAUNCEY MCKEEVER,  
*Acting Adjutant-General.*

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

*Copy of report and action upon an application of William Mackay Porter, addressed to the Adjutant-General, October 20, 1882, for the removal of the charge of absence without leave against his record as an officer of the Army from July 18, 1868 to December 21, 1869.*

[Report of Adjutant-General to the Secretary of War.—Case of William Mackay Porter, late William S. Mackay.]

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
October 27, 1882.

He served as an enlisted man in the Third Massachusetts Cavalry, from April 8, 1864, until September 28, 1865, when he was mustered out with the regiment as sergeant major. He next enlisted in the regular Army October 24, 1865, and was assigned to Company D, Third Battalion, Eleventh Infantry, with which he served until September 11, 1866, when he was discharged as first sergeant by reason of appointment as second lieutenant, for which appointment he was recommended by many officers of his regiment. He was transferred to the Twenty-ninth Infantry September 21, 1866, and while an officer of this regiment he left his command at Lynchburgh, Va., July 18, 1868, and remained absent therefrom without authority until December 21, 1869, when he reported in person to the Adjutant-General in this city and explained his absence as follows:

That on July 18, 1868, while laboring under temporary mental aberration, brought on by pecuniary difficulties, he left his post at Lynchburgh, and after wandering purposelessly from city to city he found himself in New Bedford, Mass., where he shipped as cook on board a whaling vessel; that after being some time at sea he came to his senses, and, realizing what he had done, surrendered himself in February, 1869, to the United States consul at Port Louis, Mauritius, the vessel's first port of call; that being out of means and being unable to return to the United States he remained at Port Louis until October 22, 1869, when, with the assistance of the consul, he sailed for the United States, where he arrived December 18, 1869, and reported to the Adjutant-General December 21, 1869.

In view of the peculiar and mitigating circumstances under which he left his command, his explanation of which and of his subsequent wanderings being in part corroborated by the official records, a recommendation that Lieutenant Mackay be

dropped from the rolls as a deserter was recalled by the Secretary of War and he was placed on waiting orders, without trial, from December 21, 1869, date he reported to the Adjutant-General. He remained on this status until March 22, 1870, when he was assigned to the Third Infantry; was promoted first lieutenant, Third Infantry, November 1, 1872, and his resignation as such was accepted to take effect February 15, 1873. In September, 1878, the Second Auditor asked for the military history of Lieutenant Mackay, stating that he claimed pay from July 18, 1868, to December 21, 1869, and was informed that he was borne on the records as absent without leave for the period in question, and the Second Auditor was again so informed in June, 1882.

Mr. Porter (formerly Lieutenant Mackay) now reports the circumstances of his leaving his command, etc., and requests that the charge of absence without leave be removed; that if it is not in the power of the Adjutant-General to change the record, this application be submitted for the action of the Secretary of War. Mr. Porter cites section 1265, Revised Statutes, which says that "officers \* \* \* when absent without leave shall forfeit all pay during such absence *unless the absence is excused as unavoidable.*" He claims that his restoration to duty after his acquittal by the Department of *intentional* wrong, his subsequent promotion, and his being intrusted with responsible duties practically excused his absence as unavoidable. Mr. Porter claims, and there is nothing of record to disprove the claim, that there was no reason why he should have willfully absented himself so long without leave, but every reason why he should not have done so. He raises the point that as an officer who is insane can not legally resign, so, by analogy, an officer can not willfully absent himself from his post and duties when insane.

In February, 1872, on a question as to Lieutenant Mackay's status for longevity pay, it was decided by the then Secretary of War, through the Adjutant-General, that Lieutenant Mackay was not entitled to pay for the period while absent, but would be allowed credit therefor in computing length of service.

Respectfully,

R. C. DRUM,  
*Adjutant-General.*

The action of the Secretary of War in this case, which was communicated by letter to Mr. Porter November 1, 1882, was as follows:

This question having been determined by the Secretary of War in 1872, the present Secretary of War declines to take further action.

R. C. DRUM,  
*Adjutant-General*

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE, October 27, 1882.

---

AMERICAN BARK CLEONE,  
*Harbor of Port Louis, Mauritius, March 2, 1869.*

SIR: I have the honor to lay before you, as the representative of the United States at this port, the following statement:

I am a lieutenant in the Twenty-ninth Regiment of regular Infantry in the service of the United States of America, commissioned as such on the 16th day of August, 1866, after serving as an officer of volunteers during the late war. On the 18th day of last July, while serving as assistant adjutant-general on the staff of Brvt. Maj.-Gen. O. B. Willcox, U. S. Army, commanding the district of Lynchburgh, Va., I left Lynchburgh, without leave, on the evening train for Bristol, Tenn., my accounts with the Government unsettled and without notice or a word of farewell to my family or friends. After a few weeks of purposeless wandering through the States and Canada I found myself in New Bedford, when, destitute of money and too foolish to give myself up and apply to my friends, I was induced to ship on the bark *Cleone* for a whaling voyage as cook under the assumed name of William Porter. I have left my wife and child without any warning or provision, deserted the service of the United States, and am in addition a defaulter to a considerable amount until I can settle my accounts.

I can only account for my whole conduct by believing that I was temporarily insane. I had been to sea a little when a boy, and this, with the kind assistance of the steward, who knew my story, enabled me to do my work without detection, although I was utterly ignorant of cooking. The news of my flight and defalcation was published in all our papers of the 24th or 25th of July with orders for my arrest. My only hope now is to get back home as soon as possible and stand my trial, as my friends are willing and able to relieve me from my pecuniary responsibility. Captain Luce has treated me most kindly, and I would have confided in him but from the menial position I occupy. Conversation with him is difficult. I would not wish the owners

of the vessel to lose a cent by me, and would give Captain Luce a draft on New York or England for the amount of my indebtedness to the ship, which draft would be promptly and cheerfully paid on presentation. I would therefore ask you to permit me to surrender myself to you, and to send me home for trial. I would cheerfully accept any employment ashore which would support me until you could communicate with Washington if you considered it necessary. If you will grant me the favor of a personal interview at your office I think I can convince you of the entire truth of my representations. As an officer in the United States service I can not longer act as cook of a whaler. Anxiously awaiting an early answer to this communication,

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM S. MACKAY,  
Lieutenant, Twenty-ninth Infantry, U. S. Army.

UNITED STATES CONSUL,  
Mauritius.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,  
Port Louis, Mauritius, 10th March, 1869.

SIR: On the 27th February last the whale-ship *Cleone*, of New Bedford, Mass. Capt. Hervey E. Luce, arrived at this port from cruising. On the day after her arrival I received a letter from the cook of the vessel signed William G. Mackay, informing me that he had been a lieutenant in the United States Army and attached, to the Twenty-ninth Regiment of Infantry, and that while acting on the staff of Maj. Gen. O. B. Willcox he deserted the service, as he was a defaulter to the United States in many thousands of dollars, and wished me to arrest and send him home for trial.

On the receipt of this letter I ordered Mackay ashore and he confirmed the statement made in his letter. He also informed me that the account of his defalcation and desertion was published in the newspapers in July last, but on looking over a file of papers in this office I could find no account of it.

As I had nothing to prove his statement I concluded to let him proceed in the vessel to sea.

The ship will cruise between this and Madagascar for the next six months, and will probably at the expiration of that time enter this port again.

If Mackay's statement is true and the Government wish to have him arrested and sent home, I will, on receipt of advices from the Department, do everything in my power to further the ends of justice.

Please find the original letter of Mackay to me, a copy of which is on file in this office, marked Inclosure No. 1.

I have, etc.,

NICOLAS PIKE,  
United States Consul.

ANGEL ISLAND, CAL., June 29, 1869.

GENERAL: Having serious doubts of the sanity of Lieut. W. S. Mackay, who deserted from the Twenty-ninth Infantry at Lynchburgh, I am constrained to recommend that his name be dropped from the rolls of the Army without further action. Your attention is invited to the opinion of Assistant Surgeon Rose, accompanying this letter.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. B. WILLCOX,  
Brevet Major-General and Colonel,  
Late Commanding Twenty-ninth Infantry.

General E. D. TOWNSEND,  
Adjutant-General of the Army, Washington.

RICHMOND, July 9, 1869.

GENERAL: I have the honor to inclose herewith a communication from General Willcox, late commanding Twenty-ninth Infantry, in the case of Lieut. W. S. Mackay.

In my opinion Lieutenant Mackay exhibited symptoms of derangement for at least three weeks previous to his desertion. Up to this time he had been very sociable, and was esteemed and respected by all who knew him. His devotedness to his wife and family was a subject of comment by all.

During the three weeks prior to leaving he kept himself aloof from everybody and acted so entirely different as to give rise frequently to the remark that "Mackay was changed."

He had become to some extent, as I afterwards learned, involved in debt, and this, I believe, acting on a disordered brain, drove him to take the step he did.

I agree entirely with the opinion of General Willcox, and would respectfully urge that his recommendation in the case be carried out.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE S. ROSE,  
*Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Army.*

General E. TOWNSEND,  
*Adjutant-General U. S. Army, Washington, D. C.*

*No. 1576.—Certificate of non-indebtedness. Issued to W. S. Mackay.*

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, THIRD AUDITOR'S OFFICE,  
*July 13, 1869.*

It is hereby certified that the records of this office do not show any accounts or returns received or due from or chargeable against W. S. Mackay, Lieutenant Twenty-ninth Infantry.

This certificate is granted to satisfy the Pay Department that the above-named officer is not indebted to the United States on the books of this office at the date hereof.

R. M. CLARKE,  
*Third Auditor.*

Examined and entered:

A. M. GANGEWER,  
*Chief Clerk.*

PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS, *September 23, 1869.*

GENERAL: I beg most respectfully to state for the information of the honorable Secretary of War, that with the kind assistance of the United States consul at this port I purpose sailing in a few days for New York, where I may hope to arrive about the end of December. The War Department will have been apprised some time ago through Colonel Pike, United States consul, of my having arrived at this place in March last, and of my having informed him that I had been absent from my command without leave since the 18th of July, 1868. This he communicated in due course to the State Department and received a reply to the effect that the Secretary of War would apply to Congress for authority to strike my name from the Army Register; but from private communications received by the last mail I am led to hope that if I return to the United States, and submit to trial by court-martial, it will be possible to avoid the odium attendant on a dismissal. As I believe I will be able to prove that at the time I abandoned my duty, and left my wife and family without any preparation or warning, I was laboring under mental aberration, I would most earnestly beg that, taking into consideration my previous services, and the feelings of my poor wife and family, no action may be taken with a view to my dismissal from the service until I can present myself for trial or report my arrival in the United States. I beg that any communication for me on this subject may be addressed to the care of H. H. Tenney, esq., Jay Cook & Co., bank, Washington, D. C.

I have the honor to be, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. S. MACKAY,  
*Lieutenant U. S. Army, late Twenty-ninth United States Infantry.*

Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. D. TOWNSEND,  
*Adjutant-General U. S. Army, Washington, D. C.*

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,  
*Port Louis, Mauritius, October 22, 1869.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your dispatches Nos. 45 and 46, with inclosure. Referring to No. 45, and its inclosure, I would respectfully inform you that Lieutenant Mackay, U. S. Army, left this port in the steamer *Mozambique* on the 22d instant.

In my dispatch No. 99, I informed you that Lieutenant Mackay would sail from this port in the British ship *Menden* for New York, as I had made arrangements with



the captain of that vessel for his passage. On the eve of his sailing the agents of the *Menden* refused to take passengers. As Lieutenant Mackay was without a home I took him to my own residence, and he has been under my personal observation from that time until his embarkation. I believe that he requires medical care and attention. There being no direct means of communication from this place to the United States, I deemed it my duty, taking into consideration the peculiar circumstances of the case, to send him home by the steamer, giving him a letter to the consul at Alexandria, that he may be sent to his destination. I trust that under the circumstances I may be permitted to draw on the Department for the amount of his passage, etc. I have been assured by persons under whose observation Lieutenant Mackay has been, that while his conduct here has been uniformly good, yet he at times evinced symptoms of mental aberration, although I believe him to be now of sound mind. I may add that he states in the event of his being exonerated from the charge of absence without leave, he will willingly refund the amount of his passage from any pay which he may become entitled to.

I have, etc.,

NICOLAS PIKE,  
United States Consul.

---

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 21, 1869.

GENERAL: I have the honor to state for your information that on the 18th of July, 1868, I left my command at Lynchburgh, Va., without permission, and have remained absent until this date. The circumstances attending my absence are such as I trust will warrant a merciful consideration of my case.

At the time I left and for some days previously I was, I firmly believe, laboring under a mental aberration, brought on by pecuniary difficulties, which, preying on my mind, induced me to leave my command and my family without the slightest desire or intention to desert the service. After a purposeless wandering from city to city, of which even now I can give no clear account, I found myself in the city of New Bedford and there was shipped as cook on a vessel bound on a whaling voyage. After some time at sea, I came to my proper senses, and the magnitude of the offense which I had committed in leaving my post was first clearly presented to my mind. There was no possibility of my communicating with my friends or surrendering myself until the arrival of the vessel at her first port of call, Mauritius, in February last, when I at once communicated my case to the United States consul, who at once reported my arrival to the Department of State. From that time to this I have been using every exertion to return to the United States, but from want of means I could not do so until the 22d of October last, when, with the assistance of the consul, I was at length enabled to leave Mauritius, arriving at New York on the 18th instant, and reporting to you in person at the War Department this day.

Such, general, is as nearly as I can state a true outline of my case, borne out, I believe by the communications of the United States consul for Mauritius, and by the opinions of the medical and other officers of the post of Lynchburgh, at the time of my departure. As to my standing and efficiency as an officer, and my personal character previous to my departure, I rely on the favorable report of the many officers under and with whom I have had the honor to serve, both as a regimental officer and while on detached service as a military commissioner, and a registering officer in Virginia, especially Brevet Maj. Gen. O. B. Willcox, then colonel of the Twenty-ninth Infantry. I have, during my service, always endeavored to devote my whole time and attention to my duties, and up to this unfortunate occurrence I have never laid myself open to the slightest censure from my superior officers. I may add that my debts were mainly owing to the many expensive changes of station, which, with a delicate wife and little baby, I had to make in the course of one year, depending as I was solely on my pay.

I would, therefore, earnestly beg that, taking all these circumstances into consideration, with the fact that I was not mentally accountable for my actions at the time of my flight, the General of the Army will be pleased to restore me to duty, assigning me to some post where I may be able to prove, by unceasing application and correct performance of my duties, how much I desire to wipe out the sole blot on my military record, and how grateful I feel for the kind consideration thereby extended to me and mine.

I have the honor to be, general, your obedient servant,

W. S. MACKAY,  
Second Lieutenant, U. S. Army.

The ADJUTANT-GENERAL,  
United States Army.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 17, 1889.

I hereby certify that I have been Mr. William M. Porter's family physician for about fifteen years, during which time I have noticed mental aberration, steadily increasing in degree and frequency. The first severe attack was in the year 1868, when he was in the Army, lasting seventeen months. Th next in the years 1873, 1875, and 1878.

Each time his mental condition grew worse during the attacks and cleared up less and less between them. Now on account of a severe attack of pleurisy, both physical and mental power have been lost, and he wanders over the country doing the most insane things and often even threatens the lives of his wife and children when they refuse or oppose him in anything.

O. M. MUNCASTER, M. D.

Subscribed and sworn to before me on the 23d July, A. D. 1889, and I further certify that I have no interest in his pension or other claims against the Government.

T. S. HOPKINS,

Notary Public, District of Columbia.

---

*Statement of R. S. Lacey, late captain and assistant quartermaster volunteers, In re William M. Porter, alias Mackay, late lieutenant U. S. Army.*

I was captain and assistant quartermaster volunteers in the late war. From July, 1865, till the spring of 1869, I was stationed at Lynchburgh, Va., as superintendent of Freedmen's Bureau affairs. When General O. B. Willcox was assigned to duty at this post in 1866, I was placed by him at his headquarters and remained until 1869. One of the general's aids was said Lieut. W. S. Mackay. Under my quasi staff duty, I was at all times in constant daily association with said Mackay at headquarters. In the fall of 1868, without slightest warning or notice to myself or other officers at headquarters, said Mackay abandoned his duty and disappeared. No one could assign cause for his singular conduct. I contributed money with others to send his destitute and penniless wife to her parents. Subsequently, however, I learned that he went directly from Lynchburgh to some sea-port in New England, where he shipped on a whaler under an assumed name, as a galley cook for a three years' cruise. This confirmed my judgment that said Mackay's disappearance was due to some sudden uncontrollable impulse or mental aberration. Under such belief I subsequently assisted largely in securing his return to America from Australia. When afterwards he exhibited the same mental disturbance or loss of mental equilibrium at St. Louis, Mo., by abandoning business, and family without intimation and without any known cause, and enlisting as a private soldier under an assumed name, his act was certainly in consonance with his insane disappearance in Lynchburgh in 1868. His present chronic insanity I regard as merely the permanent exhibition of what has always existed since 1868, in ephemeral form.

R. S. LACEY.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 20, 1889.

---

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE,  
*Soldier's Home, D. C., July 23, 1889.*

The within accords with my own opinion and belief. There was no earthly cause discovered for a sane man to quit a fine position in the service at Lynchburgh, no trouble nor incentive known. I think he has been insane for many years with occasional lucid intervals of wild impulses.

O. B. WILLCOX,  
Brig. Genl., U. S. Army, Governor Soldier's Home.

I, Henry A. Hambright, major, U. S. Army, do certify that I first became acquainted with William Mackay Porter, when he was first sergeant of Colonel Chipman's Company C, Third Battalion, Eleventh Infantry, in the fall of 1865, that in the summer of 1866 said William Mackay Porter, known to me as William Mackay, was commissioned as second lieutenant, United States Infantry, and assigned to my company, E; that he joined at Norfolk, Va., and with his wife formed a member of my family and was treated as such.

As an enlisted man and officer Lieutenant Mackay enjoyed the respect of his inferiors and confidence of his superiors; he was devoted to his duty, of temperate habits,

and in a daily intercourse of many months I found him filling all the requirements of an officer and a gentleman. In July, 1868, he was serving on the staff of Bvt. Maj.-Gen. O. B. Willcox, I believe as A. A. A. G., as well as military commissioner of the twenty-eighth subdistrict of the first military district, Virginia. I learned about this time that he had left his post at Lynchburgh, and shortly after that he was reported as absent without authority.

It was my impression then, when he left his station and duties, that he must have been temporarily insane, as I never learned of any cause or reason for his action. This opinion I also had from others better able to judge, and given after the first heat of indignation at the apparent heartless abandonment of his wife had passed away.

HENRY A. HAMBRIGHT,  
Major, U. S. Army, Retired.

LANCASTER, PA., July 25, 1889.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
Washington, August 29, 1889.

SIR: I have to inclose herewith authenticated copy of a letter from the attorney of Lieut. W. Mackay Porter, with original inclosures, also certified by the Department, and to request you to use your good offices in securing the release of Lieutenant Porter from prison, as these papers seem to establish the fact of his irresponsibility because of unsound mind.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

ALVEY A. ADEE,  
Acting Secretary.

SAMUEL G. RUBY, Esq.,  
Consul of the United States, Belfast.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,  
Belfast, September 11, 1889.

SIR: Your dispatch No. 9, of August 29, in relation to W. Mackay Porter, is received with inclosures as stated. As I had already succeeded in securing Mr. Porter's discharge I suppose I can act no further in the matter.

He is now lying in the hospital too weak to rise from his bed, and it is highly probable that he will not live longer than a few weeks.

He has a small sum of money, not sufficient to pay his expenses to the United States. Should he so far recover as to be able to make the voyage, as I understand it I have no authority to return him at the expense of the Government.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL G. RUBY,  
Consul.

Hon. WM. F. WHARTON,  
Assistant Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,  
Belfast, September 20, 1889.

SIR: I beg to inform you that W. Mackay Porter, in relation to whom your dispatch No. 9 of August 29 was written, died in the hospital here on the 18th instant.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL G. RUBY,  
Consul.

Hon. WM. F. WHARTON,  
Assistant Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

2011 I STREET,  
City of Washington, October 29, 1889.

MY DEAR GENERAL: Mrs. Porter will hand you this. She is the widow of William Mackay Porter, who was once a clerk in the Adjutant-General's Office.

There is a singular history connected with this man, involving great suffering to his wife, and all growing out of fits of aberration of mind, to which he was subject. Mrs. Porter is perfectly truthful, and can give you such points as you desire.



Her case, for pension and some pay, I believe, she tells me is to go before the Secretary to-morrow, and it is important she should have testimony about his strange actions while suffering from aberration of mind. He was an officer of the Twenty-ninth Infantry, and left his post mysteriously in 1873 under the delusion that he was a defaulter. Investigation satisfied me that it was not so, and I caused him to be returned to duty. He afterwards resigned, went off and enlisted, and was reported absent without leave. He was relieved from the penalty, except loss of pay, on the same ground, and was detailed as a clerk in the office. When sane he was an excellent man and clerk.

General Breck may remember that he paid a voucher for sending Short, a messenger, after him once when he went away in the same singular manner. His end was really tragic. He wandered off, got a passage in some way to Ireland, was arrested there for some irregularities, was found to be insane, died in a hospital in his native city, attended by the clergyman who was his pastor in childhood, and was buried beside his father, far away from wife and children.

This is a genuine case, and if you can do anything to help Mrs. Porter (I mean in finding evidence) you will serve a most meritorious woman who has borne unusual trials with wonderful fortitude.

Sincerely, yours,

E. D. TOWNSHEND.

---

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
*Washington, November 13, 1889.*

SIR: Referring to the application filed by you for an amendment of the records of the War Department so that they shall show that William M. Porter, alias William S. Mackay, now deceased, was involuntarily and unavoidably absent from his command and duties as a second lieutenant of the Twenty-ninth United States Infantry instead of absent without leave from July 18, 1863, to December 21, 1869, I have the honor to inform you that the Secretary of War, to whom the papers have been submitted, is of the opinion that Congress is the only authority which can, under the facts of record, properly allow or definitely decide the claim for change of record and allowance of pay.

The War Department will be prepared, in case any committee of Congress having this claim under consideration shall call for information, to furnish the committee with all the facts of record bearing upon the circumstances and cause of Mr. Porter's absence.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. C. KELTON,  
*Adjutant-General.*

D. I. MURPHY, Esq.,  
*Attorney, P. O. Box 534, Washington, D. C.*

H. Rep. 1850—2

○

